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POETRY NORTHWEST

SPRING 1968

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POETRY



NORTHWEST

VOLUME NINE

NUMBER ONE

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POETRY NORTHWEST

---SPRING 1968

THE THINGS I STEAL FROM SLEEP

(from the Notebooks of Theodore Roethke)

Feeling exists in time, and in a dream.

The things I steal from sleep are what I am.

Why is poetry scary?

In truth, the diabolical comes with its desolations, Its voices, its sulphurous shimmers, On desert and plain, over the warped bedstead, The wavering delusional flowers...

The minute rages in the clock.

My bane, my joy, My bandy-legged boy, Came roaring down that manic road . . .

Harvard is not enough.

I walk in this great decay: The woods wet by the wind, The dying moss, the brown Features of time's delay...

I seem to be in darkness all the time.

*

3

He believes too much, and he knows too much. That's what we call mad.

Reared in another place, he came to woe As to his dinner: it was the thing to do...

Shall the gnarled soul Be reminded again Of an old motion. A slapping of water?

There is suffering and imaginary suffering. Both can be productive of art.

I lost what I found On a dark day, A mind unsound In extremity...

The mirror told a dirty joke.

A heavenly swearing, tearing off a piece of the wind with his wild words . . .

He stretched himself into the greatest good. Only to break the borders of his mind: All these went spinning like a cloudy day.

There are brains strewn with nothing but bones.

O.K. You're in agony: make with an agony poem.

A mere dying-beetle energy.

Now certain names knock on us like a bell. Who would believe the meaning of a stick? There's no one here to tell us we are ill: The loved adore the loved; the sick the sick . . .

I am undone by knowing what I've done.

Running from God's a long race, and it always ends in a dead heat.

For hell is always here: upon the chair And in these papers strewn upon the floor.

I'm tired. Is that maturity?

Do I stink the rolling air? This guilt's enough for towns of men: I keep it navel-tight: My pride tilting at sticks, I put this darkness in the air ... When shadows start, a changeling steps Into my dearest dream.

I'm waiting for what I am.

I'm feeling with my feet To make myself complete.

O God, we're all so full of splits. Can I have Blake cutting an orange?

My hair and my ear, my most local condition. My mile-high meringue, my prodigious pudding ... I tasted, and I ate the world.

I once took third place in a hog-calling contest.

I fear I have no mind at all.

O ye motions in air, the chameleons of disorder! The shape of the mind changes, and we move slow and silvery. What stamp is on my brow, most particular Toe? The bright features of lost angels: Yes, yes, The bright stars say...

Something in me doesn't want to be a poet.

I praise myself with howls.

This swarm of swells betrays, The small trees swirl around, And only motion stays The thin wafts of the ground, The chilly, daft profound...

I was not good enough for my own madness.

The birds are going, and their slight songs. I am ready for a deeper silence.

For a moment, he almost knew what he was doing.

No way back through the long arbors of the dead.

A desire to love myself in another world . . .

When am I sick? When am I well? Not even God, I think, could tell.

I feel sorry for the cave, said the Bear.

In his grave he went on dying.

(arranged by David Wagoner)

Carolyn Stoloff

Four Poems

IS THIS THE PLACE?

Awakened from death in a strange city by a bolt of sun, or a maid's key the closet door is ajar in a hotel room that smells of hot paper.

Voices scribble the ear; a bell rings; there's a squeal in the works of a clothesline; engines rattle the knobs of a chest; scooped out, we have no defense. From nests

of linens we rise, damp, stripped of familiar hands. There's nothing to do but ripple the broad calm of avenues trailing a wing and a shadow across the piazza at noon. If we dip

in narrow streets to pry for local graffiti we see pigeon women at windows, heavy breasts on sills of their arms, mouths full of names: Giovanni, Leonardo, Armando, plump as worms.

Our parade of loons floats by unconcerned policemen; greedy eyes widen to old geography. We pass barriers of backs. Is this the place?

We feel a tug at the sleeve and wheel, ready to dive. A boy with something to sell! We reach out—to touch a wall.

CHRONICLE

for Lean

Lost in the shower of faucets in clashing cymbals of dishes it's March—I've lost my hands cold crockery cuts my ankles and the wheels split

The children tug my apron the wounds of their mouths open they squeeze me, screaming, with tears in April a clatter of hail the roof of my mouth is frozen

They mount my thighs their ponies to pummel the toys of my breasts the toys of my breasts—their rabbits to pick at my eyes' raisins as their fevers rise in May

June—I vacuum around them roots stamped in the soil not to be reached with reason their thorns in my flesh all winter their joints the hips of my roses.

FROM A CRIB WITH HIGH SIDES

At the throat of the cathedral he pulled the wool over my light. I toppled like a paper doll, my hat began to bite my temples.

Skin numb, mouth dry, knees dragging snow,

I inch my way blindly through midnight, the deserted avenue.

Where is he? I clutch the hilt my hand closed on when I fell. Does it hold a steel blade? or the prop of a spoiled child.

This must be my street. Though he holds my thumping heart in his pocket I drag my meat from folds of his cloak and hope the cop on the beat

will stroll through the bar door twirling his stick, that he'll look up and down when I call and not mistake me for a criminal.

Yes, the hand of authority lifts me, slips me my key. Mother croons in my ear: *I am here*, *I am here*,

as I splash in her warm spring opening circles into morning.

POET IN TOWN

Eyes rising from under ponds of classes, you, scholarly to the blunt point of a pun, run from those who love you, who would hold you even by a long cord like a dog in the dangerous country. Lonely loose-jointed and afraid of nothing but nobody, quietly frantic in your hotel you call from the deep dictionary well for a touch of warmth, a short stop in somebody else's tomb. A seance of lips, a clutch of fingers across the tilting table of your sleep, and you drift off dazed, an avatar wrapped in unraveling momentary cloth.

Carol Hall

THE ABSENT QUARTET

Ι

I found a family once
In the rushes, rushes.
Their hot hidden breath was on my hands,
I let a tear fall in duty to them.
In love with days I floated safe
On the leaves, the leaves.

When robins' songs stuck in those throats, I folded hands to hug my mind.
I lost a family once
In the dark of the dust,
Cruel to myself I closed my heart
Like a clapped hand on the mouth.
Now when they howl in the dark of the moon
At my windows, windows
I let my hands fall open, leave
Them to their shallow graves.
When they walk at night I close my ears
To the worn wail of their creaking breath
Saying, saying with my mouth
"I will save something for myself."

When their clenched hands opened to my oar, I dragged their fingers from my boat

And now I spin on the silky tide In a whirlpool wider than my heart, Vowing, "no matter who goes down, I will save myself, myself."

TT

I think I shall go to the city
But I shall not go today.
I am sent for to sign a treaty,
To mine bridges, and teach ballet.
I must ride to twelve crosses on asses,
I must paint in Peru and Algiers,
But they've hidden my hat and my glasses
And I know they have need for me here.

I think I shall come to the country
But I shall not come tonight
Though I've given my word to gentry
Who are tartars at any slight,
And I'm needed in Nome as a witness.
I have access to key and to file,
But I have my own feeling of fitness
And I tell you I'll stay for awhile.

There are fishermen willing but weary Who are waiting to hear my good word. They need intellects even but fiery. I could give them both peace and the sword. Oh, the man with the pouch and the packet Is attentive on pike and on pier, But they've hidden my hands in a jacket, So I know they have need for me here.

III

Father, I dreamed the horses came, Their nostrils red and wild.

Our dreams are slow and all the same, So sleep, so sleep, my child.

Mother, I dreamed you left my god And ran to wed another.

Your fancies are so wild, my child, I only kissed my brother.

Cousin, I dreamed I loved you, But you were not in danger, So why was I afraid for you?

Miss Smith, you are a stranger.

ΙV

My long legs are old
And my kneecaps are skinny,
It is many long years since they were skinned.
I wear glasses, not braces, my hair is not shiny,
I have already dined.
Years ago I whistled in a new way,
Walked the street with the step of an angel or a boy.
Dry greens are gathered now, and why
I have remembered, telling of them, is a mystery.

My neck is not nice. I have a mole I did not have, on my right breast. But formerly No one could jump as high at a new word spoken. Oh, millions could I suppose, but they are unwell. All fact is formal now, seeded and sold, The cakes disposed of, all the pledges made. Strangers saw to it I am afraid, At least not strangely. And if I thirst for joy I shrug. It passes. My losses are not new.

Lewis Turco

THE SIDEBOARD

The monster in the corner the tame gargoyle kisses the daily china guards

the stainless service serves as retainer swallows towels and sustains this daily bread

till it is served sets the tone complacent against the wall which like

the lining of a belly envelops the hours envelops the food of hours

heartbeats watchticks pulses and upon the top shelf of the corner familiar there

is enshrined an old heart a windup clock its pendulum counting meals stainless

service linen and conversation ruminant browsing continent the familiar monsters in the corners.

Robert Hershon

Two Poems

THURSDAY, JULY 27

1. Morning

waiting for coffee smoking reading a 1961 ladies home journal

bugs on the big window some inside some outside

wanting

2. Afternoon

sitting on the queen red tens on his thigh the weather will clear by noon

look for kings his mother said

rain ending by two the three of clubs torn the five the nine the jack in the toilet

weak sunlight around four

3. Evening

the same black bird flies toward the house again

we do not sense the variety of his circle

shadow not shade the grass rapidly upgreen the ice melting another dinner

probably the same black bird probably the same last boat on the bay probably the same fallen channel marker

we fight during dinner i slam a door you throw a plate the children hide we attack our guests

still it grows dark again

4. NIGHT

a moth in the room wings against the window

thunder. the storm moving closer. children will awake. you dream always of lightning. the moth will fly into my mouth. i will eat its dusty wings.

lightning. the same face at every window. a dead gull on the lawn. headless. a thousand silverfish devoured. torn moths on the waves. scream of a boatman. vomiting hunchback under the house.

darkness again. insane whispers of children in night. then silence. fraud. everyone awake. waiting. wings.

BY THE BEAUTIFUL SEA

I am fading from the bed and reappearing on the floor three feet to the right, reformed by these compassionate machines, the oxygen, the blood, the intravenous feast, the pump that drains my gall.

An uncle shaves me and cries. The wallpaper dances. The tools of my living flow from a painted bullseye slit, my heart staining the sheets, my lungs slapping to the floor, doctors wade in my juices.

I am in a boat, eating transparent sandwiches with the father of the nurse. We are kelly green. We are thinking of pie. Banana pie. Only pie. Moving to the right. Dante thought of pie. Coolidge.

Alvin Greenberg

NEW YEAR'S EVE, 1966

now's not the time, I said, for watching the time, just time

for some few things instead: say, get this mess cleaned up, kids off to bed, cards put far away, lights out, and you to party though you don't like that word

or deed and in mere waiting answer now the question of my temporizing, or: how

late is it, anyhow, when in another room the kids are playing

poker, and the seas are full of bright blue jellyfish, when the southern cross lies so badly tilted down on the horizon; in short, the day is

gone that I wanted to dive in, the tide is out, that kiteshaped constellation can't cut loose and soar, the beach is dark with still blue lumps and the dealer

takes two (one for me and one for you) and has to smile at some secret in his hand, a change in rules, the game is

fish, all the suits are blue, they play by starlight, bent down over numbers, all goodnights said, counting the costs and determined that

tonight it must be we, not they, who have to go to bed.

James Mauch

Three Poems

18

FOR MATTHEW AT TWO YEARS

Chance of a stardust speck thrown off a galaxy, my seed whirled from love's flash

to reach out and join into the God-willed miracle of this billion-celled boy now sleeping in his room, whorl of blond hair pressed to the flat, square cribsheet,

breathing the dark world in, exhaling himself molecule by molecule into air

flowing over the sill and touching the twist-plumed cypress that shadows his window,

drifting to feed black flames of bushes, settling on ivy coiled thick about the house,

as his white dreaming settles upon me softly: manna in the mind's wilderness,

quieting the murmuring tribes of thought under the cold moon of fatherly wisdom

that faintly outlines the rock-strewn spiral path of forty years' wandering.

Love leads me to his door, I stand there, a cut-out man in the squared moon,

my shadow reaching out, split by the crib slats into fingers, lies across him

like the soft hand of death.

THE ALTERNATE WORMS

(For Kay)

... the lover, unlike wren or stallion,
Allies himself with worms, his alternates.

—Thomas Hornsby Ferril

Lashing my face and hands, spattering the mud at my feet, the first hard rain of winter whips in from the west through the hedge of poplars that point their branches, long, bare, and white, upward against the murky afternoon sky. The elements have their way:

Birds, animals—all living things have settled into place.

I'm left with my life.

Between heaven and earth, without roots or wings,
I walk into my thirty-fifth year.
(Time's truth clipping, severing, laying open to the quick.)
A slender self is finally
the self. Fragile. Free.

I know another world, the ground heaving, splitting open to bare the slime of worms, chaff of moles, snake refuse, the burrowers coming up to scurry in panic about my feet; and the sky dropping, impaling itself on the racks of trees, shrouding, isolating me from all but the scream of bewildered birds.

One wedge keeps the world level, a blunt steel fact you've driven home: we love each other.

I walk through the poplars to a bare hillside, gladdened by the sting and chill of the rain, the numbness in my soaked feet; the flat gray sweep of heaven focuses down to the joy of my eye; in the soil beneath me, pledged to us forever, lie the supplanting snakes and moles, the alternate worms—Let them now keep their place!

AFTER BATHING MY SON DAVID

The water spiraling into the drain takes your eye, enchants, perhaps even frightens you: the trembling wreath uncoiling, momentarily beautiful, drops down the black hole.

(That's right, it's trickling through the sewer pipes out to the river, and the river flows to the sea.)

A long time your eye will sight down the line of my finger—I'll show you the shape of rainwater cupped in a leaf, a rainbow flag hanging in the mist off a fountain, suncaught spray as a dog shakes off (silver porcupine!), a point of fog moving across the marshes like a sow swallowing up glints of sunlight with her reeking mouth, and when the moon lifts her hand from the Pacific hump, letting the harbor waters slide back out the channel, you'll hear the suck and hiss of jetty rocks and pilings that have eroded like milk-teeth roots, the creak of straining hemp and the thump of wood over in the moorings, the sigh of newly-cut runnels that crack the sandspits with dark threads draining the tidepools. . . .

Little boat, I've seen too much.
You're tied to a rotting wharf,
a wharf that quivers as each feather wake crosses underneath.
The most placid day, there's a storm between hull and piling,
and I've watched a too-short painter lift a prow out of the water—
as well as pull it under.
Pilings buckle, planks sag into the mud, harbors silt up.
Water takes it all.
You will go with a floodtide,
the sea's shoulder nudging you into the current.
Love will cry out in the snapping of lines.

Stephen Kessler

A SONIC

BOOM! awakens you at dusk.

(I've been asleep) but now the broken glass of every dream you ever had prevents your bleeding eyes from opening (So this is it) you think (I see it clearly now: it's growing dark) / If you begin to move you'll trample on the many-colored fragments (And if I do not?) you're bound to bleed to death (I see) / This is the way the world begins: not with a bang, but syllables (I hear decisions climbing up my throat) a pair of sneakers for the voice whose hopes are your descendants (They—) descend: they move ever so carefully across the cracking dome: they feel their way along the air

Heather McHugh

STREAM OF KITCHENESS

Buttery and balmy in my slip, shod Barely by the bottoms of my black Feet, full of blown-ups, full Of you, singing like the needled fish That slide still with a guilty glint The length of my midnight veins.

The cake swells out past all Thermometers, the oven bursts, the wall Wells up like an eye. Swimming, I'm insane; I whip my doughy thank-you's in a flower print Apron, at an underwater flame, this two a.m. The dish Wheels wonderfully, hung on a tired eye's pull, Imagined out of round. Currents make the back Door swing; you sleep. The curtains hold the rod.

Stuart Silverman

Two Poems

PHASE TWO

Τ

Homunculi fascinate me.

I almost could be one, travel back from the womb, wait for the right time, the moment waiting for me, and fling myself out in a great mob happy to be part of that froth of being.

I remember the row of bottles in the castle-shack in *Clea*, evil liquids shiny like oil covering midges.

They were said to hold souls those tiny forms and in deep nightmares they moved, only slightly, floated in the oil, their unshut eyes filmed with lust.

 Π

Alas, poor Tristram!

Defrauded of half your vital spirits,
a lady's whim scuppering your currents,
the old clock tittering in its beard at the stairhead,
and Walter, who in his fifties grew exact,
humping his beef down the hall to corner time.

Tristram, I often think of you ebbing into the dark, waiting for time to catch you at the end of a tube

and spew you into the world wet and spongy as a newt. What ever became of your violet eves and lashes tipped with jet. and who, once Yorick died, shoveled you into your mound soft and furry as man's first descent?

TTT

Out of the startling cinema of dream I broke, scratching through to reality. There was no one there. The walls pushed the paint in green slabs against the powerful air. Sunlight moved in New Guinea. The Red Guards broke down in tears unable to focus their violence in Peking. Our leaders fled from desire moving into a gray of being, not quite satisfied with what they said but finished. and plotting something on the Big Board in another room.

On the Chicago River ice slowed, the river went underground. We saw University Hall, through snow, unable to come down, stuck in the sky like a gigantic lob. "I built that thing" I heard a workman say waiting to complete Phase II despite snow, ice, and an air dirty with Gary, Indiana, and South Chicago blowing between the vanes of that stone rubber.

TV

I grow not better as I grow older. Like Tithonus, struggle to be young wasting night after night, feed on the thought of ageless cells frightened into movement, gathering by stages as salmon do, moving like eels to seed-grounds a thousand miles away. What larks, Pip! it looks like going on for rain! If, in all this hall, I could trace a human form, my touchy flesh might tighten like my tie.

Understand: a full professorship is not the end of my ambitions; I've even stopped eating in the faculty lunchroom, in protest.

POETRY

MOVING IN

Tunkies, tramps knocking snow out of their shoes, whores with bad teeth, winos, people on the beach. sailors tilted in hammocks over rough water, clerks on their day off, men going to the chair

build fabulous structures that squat in the mind. The poet, too, only he kicks them out by words into the wind's cough, down the crow's slack craw. and moves in later, when the sound has stopped.

Craig Curtis

Two Poems

ON THE STRAFING OF A CHURCH IN BARCELONA, 1937

One of their own came down on them today. Accelerating smoothly out of the sun It made the beads tremble on churchvard tables. Sellers scattered with that buckshot run. Now vague, now out of breath, tradesmen sort Their ware. The quarrel may go on now, content it begged The question admirably where bodies nestle by the door In the mild catholic noon and flies dream on still legs. That plane may climb and follow down a threadbare Road its map and plan. But can it, its drift Wide and generous, escape the modern night Those cannon make? Do any go anywhere Over the dead? Or do they only lift A bruised face toward unimaginable sights?

LORCA

In the afternoon, through the heat and bicker, a loyalist Found him. Recumbent, very quiet among others In the shadows, among coats and faces missed By country buses, his eyelids silk with dust. Brothers, those in Granada, those few in Madrid, Shall hear of it. Touched by a partisan, too dark below the road For the view of generals, Lorca lies. What he did Proved little, only that he lived in a childish mode. His killers might have stopped him for the heckle In his words, but few saw greater danger soon Or late in a song. To know what Lorca wrote Was to know it useless—as useless as freckled Leaves in autumn courtyards, where pale half-moons Do nothing for those Spaniards vagrant in their coats.

Brent Logan

SONNET IN HER ABSENCE

She had no place, particularly, to go, so, going, went her pretty way wherever she was sent: loved all her family through their differences because the Bible told her to, believed the Bible at her priest's command, obeyed her priest lest God object, and, as reward, was blessed with beauty and a mind that never questioned where her conscience was—it went its subtle way wherever it pleased: ignored the ugly, praised itself, and more than eagerly accepted what it felt rewarding to its conscientious tour de force: it pared her pretty soul to the bone. She had no place to go—and soon was gone.

William Harmon

Two Poems

LITANEIA

Rose of Sunrise
Ourlady of the Time of Disease
Pinetree green green under snowdrop showing

Rose of Terror
Ourlady of the Prime of Erotic Money
Pinetree green under snowdrop

Rose of Suicide
Ourlady of the Clime of Flowers Unfolding
Pinetree green green under snowdrop growing

Rose Inexplicable
Ourlady of the Lime of the Firing Squad
Pinetree green under snowdrop

Rose of However
Ourlady of the Crime of Imaginary Numbers
Pinetree green green under snowdrop blowing

Rose of Heresy
Ourlady of the Dime of Upward Mobility
Pinetree green under snowdrop

Rose O Flower Unsymbolic
Ourlady of the Mime of Orthodox Roses
Pinetree green green under snowdrop going

Rose of Yes
Ourlady of the Rime of Nevertheless
Pinetree green under snowdrop

THE BLUE DRUNKARD

The blue drunkard who numb to intercourse fell naked off his own frenzied front porch step and spent all night Saturday snoring in mud and pine-straw mulching among the boxwoods woke on his bad back Sabbath dawn and peeled pink eves to an absolutely beautiful morning glory growing blue around his hands and fingers and winding up a long white string beside a spider's elaborate web connecting rib cage armpit elbow and hump of hip and there captivating a couple of odd gnats and moths

Sudden emphatic
fast American
panel truck passed with
its polychromoencylopaedic
load of sweet-smelling
Sunday papers up
the empty street of
the development
laughing

Dizzy teethbrush no

breakfast no thanks blue spring suit unyielding white shirt grey tie with sore red dots aching black shoes no Sunday school he

attended only the foulmouthed morning worship service at eleven in the stained light

Benjamin Saltman

SUNNY ENGINES

Now I'm 40
I see the machines.
Machines love the light.
Even the stars are oiled.
A human face grows white, the eyes coiled in the head, but machines are better than that.

Toward evening the bridges have baby cars, winter sunset traffic is frail, wrapped in orange flannel flown out from the town. Why put down machines? Reflections rise from deep sides of the cars like water.

Her mouth cool at the window, the sun combs her dangerous long hair. I have no wife or child so fair.

We've failed so far, or I've failed, looking this way and that, swerving, duplicate, changing only lanes. I fall home nervously, we're nervous on the mildest winter nights. Streetlights and headlights, chrome goes wild in the underpass. Our earth rocks its children in curved glass.

David Widener

Two Poems

THE ORPHAN'S WAR

It was in the time of Ali Baba, Jap flags and Sabu, Dry Bones on the radio, And rock candy from RKO.

It was at the Home during the War, Where children put in their time: Nice if you were pure orphan, But okay if you were not.

Father for a Day Would bring in the Marines: The sentry games, the walks. Every fourth-week Sunday

The Movie Ladies, the walks: A thousand and one hugs In the hush of Fairyland, Rock candy, honeysuckle.

Now in this time was a boy At war with a billboard Camel, A boy more strange than Sabu, A Camel as real as Japanese.

Each night from our monkey bar jungles, The matrons asleep with their radios, Everything twinkling and ready, We awaited the first Jap-shadow sign,

When down the fire escape he would come, Crawling on his belly to the fence; Then up, up and over, assaulting The smoke rings with his stick

While kissing his wrist with his teeth, The Japs falling back, falling back In the circling heat of that Camel. Up, up on Suribachi he climbed,

To sit like a blue-eyed jelly ad Wiping the smoke from his eyes, As Hollywood, that golden snake below, Curled into her warm Pacific.

Soon he would jump off with his shovel, That stick that is all things to a boy, To bury the dead of his war, Licking the blood from his wrist.

CELEBRATION

The sirens sang the War out and I was eager to be the first boy over as I crouched by the fence that night. each tree beyond a quick Jap waiting, huge beneath the August stars. Inside my chest castor oil spoons beating, beating, drum roll for the first boy caught. Slowly, up the vines. honeysuckle buds at my neck. cold wire gashing my thumb. Then over and running with blood in my pocket, the wind like a sponge in my throat: running running from the Home into Hollywood, into the celebration: white paper snow falling in the hair of women lifting me up in their joy: fire high beneath the Warner clock the Ali Baba dwarf waving the news of the Peace: dancing without his boots a drunken soldier with a silver dollar, "Here kid, go buy a wash cloth." Then deep in the Chinese, taking the stage with my best Jap vell: flashlights closing in to shush my dark captives, though waking the old man who lived behind the curtain. Then out the exit with a bang to be heard in China: the War going on, going onthe cop coming out of the night like Clark Gable.

John Taylor

Two Poems

IMMORTALITY THROUGH FREEZING

Frozen like cod or haddock, drowned
In liquid nitrogen that smokes
From cold, no mourners will surround
Your solid silence. Only jokes
Will follow you into the sleep
Until the final trumpets sound
And wake you though God knows you'll keep.

Birdseye has frozen peas for you, Spinach and broccoli are green, But you are white and are the true Inheritor of this unclean Jumble. Eat the frozen host Although your lips are ghostly blue; Nitrogen is the Holy Ghost.

Stiff as the crucifix you wait
For resurrection on this earth,
Kept in a can like catfish bait.
You are a thought for present mirth
But we may change our minds. You try
A gamble time may consecrate
And only mystagogues deny.

I looked into the future and
I saw you thawed. The room was packed
With hungry faces; every hand
Reached for a steak. The butcher cracked
His knuckles, and began to cut.
This is my flesh, you said, demand
The best. I saw your eyes were shut.

A ROTTING LOG

Falling away to dust,
The log becomes itself
More completely the more
It settles slowly down
Into its own slack length
And lies sleeping, dull
As that other sodden log
The beached alligator,
And as it sleeps digests
Itself in slow decay,
Falling, falling away.

The silent, smothered fires Glow coldly at night,
Mere rumor to the eye—
The log is its own ghost,
A body that haunts itself
Although it is dead,
Possessed and possessing
With its muted violence
The saprophytes that feed
Upon this density
Keeping its proper silence.

Arthur K. Oberg

Two Poems

VOYAGE

To scamper back, out of the long dream, Must we have always the thin glass Shattered over the sink, sharp shards In our hands? Love has been difficult These days, its skittery ways a problem Child rocked in the womb. The public Waiting to brand us by insult It nightly thinks up—pulling the bed From under us, inventing what today Shall pass as good and valuable. Always a new game groomed to throw us off, Or a new cloud, seeded for storm, Bring us up short of the house, The door only to enter Our lost children, playing old Spoons for music, Plates spread out on the lawn, the five Of us wet from the descent down.

THE EXECUTION OF ORDER

Hearing the longstream go Again, beneath, after the rains, I know, that to have you For the woman you are

Is to come out of that sleep When the servant, sent By the king, went whipping The evening flowers,

That sleep we put right By love, annealing The uncoverings of lash, fury Sent out before us like a flame.

Michael Van Walleghen

Two Poems

THE MOON KITES

O solitude whence come the stones of which, in the Apocalypse, the city of the great king is built.

Are you conscious...of the stages of your growth? Can you fix the time when you became a babe, a boy, a youth, an adult, an old man? Every day we are changing, every day we are dying....—St. Jerome

This is Maple Grove and no one comes here much—a few kids now and then or from the new neighboring apartments some retired fireman perhaps to exercise his dogs.

No one seems to mind.

They bury now across the road.

Well, this spring, after months of pacing in your room or staring absently at books at letters saved or never sent or looking simply at whatever monuments of absence distance or decay the day might balance nicely on the back of a hand, you've come once more to Maple Grove, reading out as absently the names you'd memorized last fall and are vaguely pleased

that things look much the same, that the same few graves, the smaller headstones near the fence, remain decked sadly out in last year's green and plastic evergreens and that the mausoleums still manage somehow to suggest a small grimy compromise between an old unhappy school and its adjacent church.

Somewhere beyond the mausoleums, fluttering somewhere over the used up place where the monuments have settled, tilting oddly in the weeds. two kites are rising are floating like the moons you might imagine keep rising still over childhood's leveled and disremembered town, the silly moons of love moons of that moonlit and leafy entropy of random stones towards which the blank white and real moon or even love itself so irretrievably depend. Still, how colorfully they speak our need for flags bright signs and metaphorfor such simple celebrations of the weather as the forever hovering and impossible angel

might afford those saints like bald Jerome who, though sick and altogether weary nonetheless sat quiet in his wilderness, neither wary of the lion nor bruised enough with the wisdom of stones.

THE TENNIS MATCH

Midnight. My serve. A darkness stirs in the far courtthe tricky competition warming up, rehearsing now with either hand some deadly foreor backhand shot. The banked lights hum. In the first rows the faces tighten and then diminish into father's best disapproving squint. This helps. I wave and give it all I've got. The ball drones importantly then leaps off ... where? Into nothing. The void perhaps. Perhaps never to return. My father finishes his beer bends the can and leaves. The crowd leaves. Doors slam. The last beer cans tinkle softly

from the parking lot.
Tense, vibrant, competitive I crouch and stare into the far court listening... as the slow stars revolve and flutter over the blinding lights which fix me here.

Robley Wilson, Jr.

THE MARAUDER

When they shot the bear out of his tree. North, on Monday, in Cedar County, It occurred to us the bear knew, too, Something was not enough—a stirring, A vearning for sweetness buried deep In the shrunk gut, portentous forage. We knew and he knew: it was something Not to perish of capture, sloven And soft from caramel corn, smarting With mange under the fur, with cinders Lodged in the cracked pads. Something—at least Not a cage—but not truly enough. When they shot the bear out of his tree. A single shot, and the limber trunk Yawed with the target, sprang back, sang out As green wood does in the springtime, stopped— When the bear chose to drop, swam the air Littered by yellow buds, pulled with him The slim top twigs to the populous Field—the tree bled: the earth at its roots Shook and worms far under felt: waking. For them, too, not enough, but something,

Stanley Cooperman

Two Poems

TIRESIAS

You:

what did you eat last night? what books have you swallowed, which dreams, whose women?

What shirt did you tear from your brother's eyes to hang

dripping
with scarlet buttons
on that clothes-line
stretched between your arms?

cannibal...

pirate...

Whose words pierce your throat, and why are your pockets filled with gold ripped from other people's mouths?

Under your collar a fat Nero scrapes his fiddle with the legs of girls or grandmothers,

and behind your brassiere a white bull

plunges at the moon, spitting children

with the red weapon of his love.

HANNAH'S VISIT

Like Sabbath flowers sewn to the jaw of an old man, for decoration, for love... or a nightingale plucked to its poor wrinkled skin, she enters the deepest room of your house with all her fingernails broken into colored paint, and sits holding the points of her knees.

Eggs
fry in the corners of her smile,
their yolks screaming
conceptions
at midnight, when thighs
open, and green owls
hunt rabbits
in her private jungle;
her voice circles
once
or twice, and lands
on the knobs of its claws

POETRY

in the middle of little boys rubbing themselves all over the rug.

Is she pregnant?
will her father ride
black
horses
on her best friend's bed?
why have her teeth
turned into glass,
and who polished her brain
until it gleams
in a knot
of crooked mirrors?

Morton Marcus

Two Poems

WHAT I KNOW

What I know outlasts a tooth, is larger than a year or a wife pregnant with rain.

I know what words cannot spell, intricate engines of light alive in the middle of seeds.

I say, believe in common things: the leer of a spoon, the knife that gets straight to the point.

Have faith in weather, rocks, the damaged screens of lust. Become what your dreams create. Platinum waters creep up the shore, seasons are folded in a fan. Hands and whispering heads are here, now.

I have come to this knowledge with every tooth and grain of light. Knife, spoon, even the rocks, breathe.

SERENADE TO MY WALKING STICK

(for Fernando Mercado, who carved it)

Whittled from a mop handle, painted blindman's black and topped with a carved wood head, you, stick, stride through the fields and heaving hills without bending a knee or taking a breath.

I'm not so perfect: heart sags in my chest, even my wrists sweat, and my knees, my knees, old creakers—worse than an Erector Set.

Don't look at me that way, wooden head. You are no better than a mandrill's mask, an African witch doctor's cheap disguise.
And you, stick, tattooed all the way down like a drunken Dyak paralyzed in sleep—

POETRY

your looks leave much to be desired. Even the bearded old man, the patriarch half-way down your hipless form, is no one to talk: his pursed lips are chiseled and cracked and always prepared to admonish or deride.

Stick, I stood you against the wall so you could rest.
Why do you question me so with your swirls of circle and line?
Every night, your silence and your stares, your perfect posture though you lean against the wall.
Say something, tap against the bookcase, or do the dance that's sacred to the trees.

Stick, you are not a companion I enjoy. You show me how all objects are separate and alone and only keep the place they occupy. I felt the past was carved into your frame. I thought each face would speak unwritten laws

and wanted you to share my weight and stride with me across this world and know the things I loved. But you were what you were, and like the others kept your secrets and your face. unable to release affection or anything that's passionate and reciprocates with more than cordial grace. Stick. you're more my deputy than my friend.

So stand like that against the wall until I grab vou by the head and make you walk, propel you through the empty evening streets like a grandfather guided by a bullied son. For even though you show me nothing but contempt, it's true you make me swagger when we walk and are an almost human presence in my hand.

POETRY

Frances Colvin

THE GREAT MUSEUM ROBBERY

Feeling that someone must have painted her portrait, long ago, she kept walking through museums (Uffizi, Prado, Tate) looking for her face.

Today's a frame that will not hold me; I must be embraced in gold. No weather's safe unless it's walled, air still, light constant. I am so old

But she found nothing like herself: no eyes, no smiles, no fingers scorning the green satin they caressed and pinched.

Yet in this gallery of glances I am surely here my other self, the one original Velasquez or Vermeer, to straighten my bewilderment.

Among the Picassos

her eyes seemed out of place. She felt her cheek and stared and stared. The colors rose; she fed. No obscure corner was unvisited. Louvre, Orangerie, she was the last to leave. Beneath her hedging tweeds, Rubens and Titian fought for mastery. She gained some weight.

When morning came, the guards were stricken by pallid Cezannes, Rembrandts with faces gone, Degas without a single dancing girl, da Vincis stripped of everything but sky.

Onto the street once more, unrecognized, and yet my face, my face, this blur, this flap of flesh, somewhere looks down on crowds, replete, magnificent. Until I find myself, odalisque, saint, or queen: sustain me. I hear there is a small museum in Ghent.

Ramona Weeks

Two Poems

THE POPCORN DAY

What is that old man doing, said my friend, peeking out the curtain of that dead house where upstairs lived a poet with the face of his grandmother on the ceiling of his mind and in the front room lived a merry chase of fairies. In the house behind

lived an old man, a moldy turnip-top, who hung his underwear out in the rain to dry, and had a phiz like a valentine gone to seed. The noise shot like a thunder-clap over that neighborhood, a dinosaur spine crumbling, a loud, ransacking Hindenburg pop.

It was the garbage burning in a barrel, but it was more: the Saturday uproar of ricocheting popcorn in a pyre of red and white and yellow. The old fossil's put popcorn in his garbage! The backyard air was full of whizzing, blossomings, and whistles.

The old man looked bright and unbelieving. The popcorn jumped for joy; parachutes landed on the embattled yard in small cahoots like cauliflowers; punctuating in uneven, dying syllables, forlorn dashes and dots, leaving a cloudy littered trash of heaven.

THE PERILS OF NYOKA

"Allah be praised!" the girl was always saying in the Saturday serials, crisscrossed upon the torture racks while the ceiling fell with spikes and the turbaned hero arrived with a lever in the nick of time.

Somehow before she was pulled into the cave of everlasting winds, her fingers slipping, sarong tearing, and the sheikh massaging his moustache, help always came: the legionnaire who had forsworn his fortune, the little dwarf who loved her more than life.

She was the missing daughter of an earl: in an impossible plot, the Arab villains knew she had the famous Inshallah pearl, but didn't know it. And the legionnaire came riding out of some old guilt to find her there

upon the burning pyre, while vultures danced in the ascending smoke, longing for her eyes. In the last chapter, which I always missed, she was restored to wealth and joy, the famous pearl a pasty landslide on her heaving breast.

Her father beamed a foolish, earlish smile upon his daughter and inquired what he could do for her. She begged for and received a pardon for her savior. See them ride out, unparalleled, to meet the dawn. Long will the iron maidens languish empty, the bright knives hack the air, the vultures hang doleful in a fireless void. Always a bridesmaid, never yet a bride—each Saturday she tried to lose the world.

Adrien Stoutenburg

SCIENCE NON-FICTION

You will not live here, nor your children, nor the old, laughing coyotes who once sang in these hills. We are leaving here soon, as the grizzly left, and the condor. (Who has seen such claws or wings?)

There is a moment yet, before the engineers arrive, to watch hummingbirds strung with garnets, madrones brown as the wrists of Indians, bay trees that smell like green candles, and listen again for the silence that made a darkness for owls with horned mouths speaking like the E string of a guitar.

The termite with his sad drill opposed our tenure, but could not defeat us, nor the bats strumming their teeth within the wall where the telephone snickers— (they have always been there, in strange cradles, a tiny echo of dark wires)— nor the wood borer on the sill with his attic dream.

Our trunks are ready, a funeral of hinges and locks, stuffed with snapshots, rose pips, pencils, and cool clothing for the desert the compass at hand, the water bag hanging from the bumper like a leaky, gray pillow.

(Who has not seen the latest clover leaf, the wind socks, orange cheeks blown out, above the black-topped bay, and freight trains hauling greater hills?

Who, on this coast, has heard any word of the ocean since the last cement truck passed, starfish still burning in its wheels?)

Shirley Kaufman

Two Poems

I HEAR YOU

The promises of mother—smiles, soft fingers children could not touch. You and your sisters gliding like fish (the tank was full of your stare) to market, to market, sun in your scarves, the ripple of exquisite goiters.

You never wore a hat except in mirrors, your eyes were violet under the veil, under the knotted squares calling me child. But I went after you, mother to mother, put you together when your bones rode you apart. Something was always breaking down inside you.

Save me, you sob in a dream, but nobody runs like a friend to your door. And I'm in my own garden this time, digging a ditch for my heart.

What did you give me, mother, that you want it back? An empty book to put my poems in, peeled apples, Patsy dolls.

Each day I sucked at your virtuous breasts and I'm punished anyhow.

MOTHERS, DAUGHTERS

Through every night we hate, preparing the next day's war. She bangs the door. Her face laps up my own despair, the sour, brown even the heavy hair she won't

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tie back. She's cruel, as if my private meanness found a way to punish us.

We gnaw at each other's skulls. Give me what's mine. I'd haul her back, choking myself in her, herself in me. There is a book called Poisons on her shelf. Her room stinks with incense. animal turds, hamsters she strokes like silk. They exercise on the bathroom floor, and two drop through the furnace vent. The whole house smells of the accident. the hot skins, the small flesh rotting. Six days we turn the gas up then to fry the dead. I'd fry her head if I could until she cried love, love me!

All she won't let me do.
Her stringy figure in
the windowed room shares
its thin bones with no one.
Only her shadow on the glass
waits like an older sister.
Now she stalks, leans forward,
concentrates merely on getting
from here to there. Her feet
are bare. I hear her breathe
where I can't get in. If I
break through to her, she will
drive nails into my tongue.

W. R. Moses

AUGUST: LAKE OF THE WOODS

T

The hand of the shriveling prisoner in his dungeon Reaching through bars for the water out of his reach—No, of course not. But I feel the stretch Of secret roots down a rock slope covered too thinly With earth, for the last, least undryness, and only Finding more dryness. The sun, you could say, has won. The birch leaves above those roots have become sun-Color. They are very lovely, the most charming Incongruity of color, congruity still of shape With green leaves near them on lucky trees rooted deep.

Some losers are fiercely open about their trouble.

Many an island pine has been heaved by the wind

Down; all the high, feathery grace

Without grace sprawled, flattened, skinned.

Wherever that happened, look what the roots have done:

Hauled right out, for the inspection of anyone,

A root-clutch of soil, to show how poor, meagre,

Thin it was, clipped weakly to unhelpful rock.

Sometimes they have hauled out a big slab of rock;

That wasn't good enough either, when things got serious.

Π

The poor old assaulted water:
How pieces from above, from the smug air,
Keep poking and altering, probing and shoving it!
Sometimes propellers of active outboards
Will pour it all of a swirl, a dizzy twining.
Sometimes paddles, or ambling dull oars,
Will punch deep, angling and dipping and jabbing.
Bright plastic lures, armed mean with steel hooks,
Come plump down against it, and sinuously bore it.

Well, up here there are acrobatic, tough pike; Hook one, he's likely to air his pugnacity Like a bass or salmon. And now, plunge, Yank! I have hooked one. Agile, no prudence, He flares from the surface. Abruptly I picture What he's really like, the avid, high-pressure Leanness—a club the angry lake plunks Hard against air, and leaves it all pulsing; And against my vision, and leaves it all pulsing.

TTT

It's an old, old concern: emptiness that isn't empty. Cavemen side-squinting into the dark; soldiers Side-squinting into the dark....

Now, this water Opaque in the cliff's shadow—is it heart-certain No fangs can rip from it? Is it sure no force That animates granite can slam down a cliff-chunk On trespassing heads?

—These are just exercises
In atavism; they pall; they don't last long.
But now, from the cliff top, from brush we can't see
Comes a crash, a big crash, perfectly here and authentic.
The dog, by her angry fear, declares bear.
But we can't see. We wait; only silence.
We wait; only silence—but what an odd silence!
There is nothing there, yet the emptiness isn't empty.

IV

Amorousness? Greediness?
I don't think either. But see our dog
Kiss, kiss, and again kiss
The scales of these two fish that sag
On a stringer: our noon provision:
The walleyes we have kept for lunch.

And see her hover cheek by jowl With me who crackle twigs for fire.

Now she leans close to the ritual Of knifing filets from the bone. What can such eagerness require For satisfaction, for relief?

I'll never know. Composure comes.

I watch excitement sublimate
Into the dignity, repose
Of a sculptured black Egyptian cat
I saw in some museum once:
The dog sits, staring with zircon eyes
Toward wave and tern and island line.

V

Slow gases now expand as smoke Above the cabin chimney; good. We need a counteractive for The past hour, when we opened up The motor wide for home, because The day drew tight with rain. Riding Squeezed tight away from icy clothes, Seeing the downdrawn vegetable, Fancying the indrawn animal Along the shore, we seemed to know Contraction is a movement in The pain direction, the fanged clutch.

On slaty riding waves that ride
The lake, some brown mergansers ride
Down near the rock shore. They look pert
And pleased under the rain and wind.
When the lively flock has drawn too tight,
They do what flocked mergansers do:
Run on the water, spraying out
To make each bird more water room
On slaty waves. Thus expanded,
They settle, looking pert and pleased.

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About Our Contributors

THEODORE ROETHKE, at the time of his death in 1963, left hundreds of notebooks and thousands of pages of worksheets full of fragments of poetry and prose, chiefly unpublished. "The Things I Steal from Sleep" is one of the first few suites or monologues, in imitation of Roethke's methods of composition, to be made from these materials.

CAROLYN STOLOFF lives and teaches in New York City. She won this magazine's Theodore Roethke prize for 1967.

CAROL HALL, who lives in Seattle, is the author of a book of poems, Portrait of Your Niece, published by the University of Minnesota Press.

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SHIRLEY KAUFMAN, a graduate of San Francisco State College, has had poems in most major American magazines.

W. R. Moses' most recent book of poems is *Identities*, published by Wesleyan University Press in 1965. He teaches at Kansas State University.

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If anyone would care to establish, or help establish, a new prize, in any amount or of any kind, the editor would be glad to discuss the possibilities by correspondence.